4theRegion
PRESENTS...

COLLABORATE
SHOWCASE
CONNECT

IT'S YOUR

NEATH PORT TALBOT CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

OPPORTUNITIES REPORT

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The *It's Your Neath Port Talbot* event, hosted by 4theRegion, was an uplifting and energising gathering of people who care deeply about the future of Neath Port Talbot (NPT).

Bringing together around 250 people, including community leaders, local businesses, passionate residents, and representatives of key organisations such as the council and the college, this event showcased the power of collaboration and shared ambition.

It was a space for open dialogue, where everyone's ideas and perspectives were valued, and where the possibilities for our county could be explored together.

The aim of the day was clear: to inspire action, foster connections, and help all of us see the opportunities that exist across NPT – opportunities to grow our businesses, strengthen our communities, and support the wellbeing and prosperity of people in every town and village. While we acknowledged the challenges ahead, from economic uncertainty to infrastructure gaps, the focus was on recognising our strengths and finding practical, forward-thinking ways to overcome barriers.

We heard about the transformative potential of a green and digital economy, the importance of

celebrating our rich industrial and cultural heritage, and the need to address pressing issues such as public transport and community cohesion. From the exciting developments at the Celtic Freeport and Port Talbot's emerging role in renewable energy to grassroots initiatives tackling isolation and building resilience, the discussions highlighted the diverse and dynamic opportunities available to us. These are opportunities that we can embrace to ensure Neath Port Talbot thrives as a vibrant, connected, and forward-looking place.

The conversations didn't just explore economic potential but also touched on how we create a place where people of all ages feel proud to live, work, and grow. A recurring theme was the importance of empowering our young people, providing them with clear pathways to meaningful careers, and enabling them to play an active role in shaping the future of their communities.

This report captures the ideas, recommendations, and connections made on the day. It serves as both a record of what was shared and a call to action for all of us to continue the work. We must nurture the collaborations and partnerships formed at this event, ensuring that the momentum is carried forward into real, impactful change. The future of Neath Port Talbot is in all of our hands, and together, we can create a county that leads with innovation, care, and a deep sense of shared purpose.

What Was Discussed?

The *It's Your Neath Port Talbot* event brought together a vibrant mix of voices, each contributing to a rich tapestry of discussion around the opportunities and challenges facing the county. From anchor institutions to grassroots initiatives, the day was packed with inspiring ideas and constructive dialogue.

The opening remarks set the tone, with speakers highlighting Neath Port Talbot's unique potential. Cabinet Secretary Jeremy Miles MS underscored the opportunities for a green, digital, and sustainable economy, emphasising the importance of collaboration to navigate the region's transition. He pointed to the Celtic Freeport and the emergence of floating offshore wind technology as transformational projects, with the potential to create thousands of high-quality jobs

and position Port Talbot as a global hub for renewable energy. The scale of these initiatives, he noted, represents a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" for Wales, underscoring the need for universities and colleges to prepare young people for future careers in these industries.

Transport and connectivity emerged as recurring themes throughout the day. Residents and representatives from local organisations raised concerns about the isolation caused by limited public transport options, particularly in rural areas and during evening hours. Stacey from POBL highlighted the challenges facing residents in accessing services and events, while others called for the Welsh Government to take greater control over transport systems to ensure affordability and accountability. These conversations emphasised the critical role of infrastructure in unlocking opportunities and enabling communities to thrive.

Grassroots voices added depth and passion to the discussions. Andre from SHIFT spoke about celebrating Port Talbot's cultural and industrial heritage, sharing examples of how art and storytelling can instil pride in the region. Similarly, Janet Weaver urged the room to reconnect with the town's rich history, suggesting that heritage could be a powerful driver for tourism and community engagement. Graham Rowland, a local historian and former Tata employee, echoed this sentiment, reflecting on the steelworks' legacy and the importance of capturing its historical significance for future generations.

The event also showcased the work of local businesses and organisations leading the way in innovation and social impact. British Rototherm shared insights into its collaborations with Toyota, demonstrating how local companies can leverage global expertise to drive efficiency and create new opportunities. Acorn by Synergie outlined its commitment to supporting employment and social value, highlighting initiatives such as a new community support hub and pledging to help 500 former steelworkers transition into new careers.

Attendees were encouraged to think beyond their professional roles and reflect on their personal stakes in the county's future. Suggestions ranged from building stronger local supply chains to embracing nature as part of community development. A small business owner shared their experience of using creativity and craft to support mental health while also striving to make their services accessible to those in need. These examples underscored the diversity of ideas and the shared desire to create a more inclusive, connected Neath Port Talbot.

The event concluded with a focus on sustaining momentum. Participants called for regular opportunities to reconvene, share updates, and hold each other accountable for progress. Councillor Sara suggested online forums and monthly meetings as practical ways to maintain connections and drive collaboration. Others emphasised the importance of following up on discussions with concrete actions, ensuring that the ideas generated on the day lead to real, impactful outcomes.

The discussions at *It's Your Neath Port Talbot* reflected a deep commitment to shaping a future that works for everyone. From tackling practical challenges like transport to harnessing the power of heritage, innovation, and grassroots energy, the event proved that when communities, businesses, and organisations come together, the connections, ideas and recommendations that emerge are hugely valuable. The collective vision shared on the day is a powerful foundation for the county's journey forward.

4theRegion PRESENTS...

IT'S YOUR NEATH PORT TALBOT CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

COLLABORATE
SHOWCASE
CONNECT

SPEAKERS

Dawn Lyle
Host, 4theRegion

Alice Jones
Public Affairs Manager,
ABP

Mark Rudge
Commercial Partnerships Director,
Acorn by Synergie

Stuart Lay
Head of IT,
British Rototherm Group

Jeremy Miles
Senedd Member

Graham Rowland
Local Resident

DISCUSSION ZONES

1

CLIMATE & NATURE

How can we build a sustainable future and a thriving green economy for our current and future generations?

2

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

What kind of business opportunities are local companies looking for, and how can we collaborate to help NPT businesses thrive?

3

FOOD & FARMING

How can we work together to enable all communities in Neath Port Talbot to eat sustainable, local and healthy food?

4

VISITOR ECONOMY

How can we better promote and support NPT's tourism and events offer and ensure the whole sector is working together?

5

HEALTH & WELLBEING

How can we collaborate across all sectors to improve the health and wellbeing of people across Neath Port Talbot?

6

COMMUNITY ACTION

How can we empower ourselves and each other as citizens to create healthier, happier local places together?

7

TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

How can we collaborate and make it easier for everyone to get around Neath Port Talbot in a sustainable way?

8

JOBS & SKILLS

How can we develop the skills and talent we need to be successful, within Neath Port Talbot, now and for the future?

1

CLIMATE & NATURE

How can we build a sustainable future and a thriving green economy for our current and future generations?

Collaboration and Shared Ownership: Participants emphasised the importance of working together across sectors to tackle climate and nature challenges. For instance, one person said,

"We've all got a part to play in that. It's not just the nature conservation charities and public bodies that need to do something. We've all got our own part to play in that."

There was also significant discussion about shared ownership of renewable energy projects like wind farms.

Education and Re-Education: A recurring theme was the need to educate both businesses and individuals on sustainable practices. One participant mentioned,

"A lot of it is based around kind of changing people's views on it and just teaching them how these things work."

Similarly, another person noted that their team is

"re-educating businesses... how they're going to achieve climate change and decarbonisation."

Nature-Based Solutions and Infrastructure: Participants spoke about integrating nature into urban planning and infrastructure development. One participant shared,

"It needs to be easy to get nature into schemes... It doesn't have to be difficult."

Others emphasised preserving green and blue spaces and investing in biodiversity,

"Instead of turning greenfield sites into industry, we need to keep them to preserve and compensate for industry."

Practical Sustainability Initiatives: Several participants shared practical efforts, such as renewable energy projects, community transport, and the use of electric vehicles. An example shared was,

"We've started an electric vehicle consultation, and when people have the conversation, they often say, 'I didn't know that.'"

Engagement with Young People: Engaging young generations in the green economy was another major theme. One participant expressed,

"The young people we work with are really interested in sustainability because it affects them the most."

Challenges and Funding: There was a focus on funding challenges and overcoming the costs of implementing green solutions. One participant shared,

"It needs money to underpin it. Certainly, we found that our wind farm is critical to that."

Another added,

"Sustainability can be more expensive upfront, but it's essential for the future of the planet."

These discussions reflect the broad consensus on the need for a multi-faceted approach to building a sustainable future through collaboration, education, and investment in both nature and green technologies.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

What kind of opportunities are local businesses looking for, and how can we collaborate to help Carmarthenshire businesses thrive?

What kind of business opportunities are local companies looking for, and how can we collaborate to help NPT businesses thrive?

Access to Information and Communication: A common challenge was the difficulty in accessing information about available funding, training, and business opportunities. One business owner said,

"It feels like I only get information if I stumble upon it rather than it being given to me."

There was a strong call for better communication and a more centralised system where businesses can easily find and access support.

Streamlining Funding Processes: Many participants highlighted issues with the complexity and timing of funding opportunities. One participant noted,

"Sometimes they don't have months to wait for a funding opportunity... quick funding notes would be really helpful."

Others expressed frustration with criteria that didn't match their specific business needs. Flexibility and quicker processing times were major requests.

Marketing Support: Marketing was consistently identified as a key area where businesses need help. One participant shared,

"By far the most important ask we get is for marketing support... but no one has time to attend the workshops we organise."

While workshops were attempted, there were suggestions for more practical, direct support, such as campaigns created for businesses, instead of training workshops.

Premises and Workspaces: A significant challenge for businesses was the lack of affordable and suitable workspaces. One business owner mentioned,

"We've always struggled because we need office and warehouse space together, and it's nearly impossible to get that in the county."

The demand for flexible, affordable spaces to support growing businesses was a key concern.

Collaboration and Networking: Participants emphasised the importance of local collaboration to help businesses grow. One person highlighted that many businesses, especially in rural areas, should work together more, saying,

"We should be working together like the people at craft fairs... bartering products and services."

The idea of having a centralised

"dating agency"

for businesses to match with the right local support and services was proposed.

Support for Small and Sole Traders: Sole traders and micro-businesses felt overlooked in funding schemes and business opportunities. One person explained,

"A thousand pounds is a lot of money for most sole traders, especially when you have to spend it before you get the grant."

They called for more support tailored to the needs of small businesses.

Procurement and Red Tape: Many businesses expressed frustration with the procurement process and red tape when trying to win contracts, especially from larger companies. One participant shared,

"Big organisations say they want small businesses in their supply chain, but they make it impossible with all the red tape."

Simplifying these processes was seen as critical for small businesses to thrive.

Flexibility in Business Opportunities: There was a strong desire for more flexible and customised support. For example, one participant shared their difficulty in securing short-term leases, explaining,

"We only wanted a year to start off, but they wanted us to sign up for three or four years."

This lack of flexibility made it harder for small businesses to expand and grow.

Discussions held reflect the need for more accessible, flexible, and tailored business opportunities in Neath Port Talbot, along with better communication between businesses and support organisations.

3

FOOD & FARMING

How can we work together to enable all communities in Neath Port Talbot to eat sustainable, local and healthy food?

Education on Healthy Eating and Cooking: Many participants emphasised the need for educational initiatives to teach both children and adults about healthy eating and cooking skills. One participant shared,

"I run cooking classes for children and adults... providing healthy eating classes can help people learn how to prepare healthy meals for their families."

There was also a call for making education more engaging, such as short, bite-sized interactive lessons to keep people interested in learning about sustainable food.

Community Gardening and Local Food Production: Community gardening was highlighted as a way to encourage people to grow their own food and connect with nature. One participant mentioned,

"We have a community garden... we grow our own produce and aim to put that into weekly food boxes and a pantry-style shop."

This helps foster a sense of community, build food resilience, and promote healthy eating.

Raising Awareness About Local Produce: Participants noted the need to increase awareness of the availability of local produce. One said,

"I live in the same village as a cider producer, but I didn't know he made cider until now."

Community or farmers markets were suggested as a way to promote local producers, helping people discover the variety of fresh food available in their area.

Support for Local Producers: Participants called for support for local food producers to help them bring their products to market and maintain sustainable practices. There was a mention of

"keeping a one-mile, two-mile, five-mile limit for food footprint to keep things local."

Supporting small producers through funding and local markets was seen as a way to build a sustainable local food economy.

Leveraging Technology for Sustainability: The discussion also included using technology to support local food production. The council's IoT radio network was mentioned, which could provide sensors to help farmers monitor conditions such as soil moisture and temperature. This technology aims to help producers make informed decisions about growing and harvesting, which can contribute to more sustainable and efficient farming practices.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Participants emphasised collaboration across different sectors, including local authorities, businesses, and community organisations. One participant mentioned the need for a

"community knowledge bank"

where information about local food production and sustainable practices could be shared.

There were also discussions about creating partnerships between food producers, local authorities, and nature organisations to encourage regenerative and nature-friendly farming practices.

Affordability and Accessibility of Healthy Food: The cost of healthy food was recognised as a major barrier. One participant said,

"Healthy and sustainable food is inevitably more expensive, and we need to change the narrative... instead of lowering food prices, we need to raise wages so that healthy food becomes affordable."

The conversation also highlighted the need to support initiatives that make healthy food accessible to low-income families, such as affordable local markets and cooking education that teaches people how to make the most of available resources.

Incorporating Sustainability in Public Services: The role of public institutions like schools was also discussed, with participants suggesting that they could lead by example in sourcing healthy, sustainable, and local food. However, the financial constraints on public institutions to afford better quality food were acknowledged as a challenge.

These themes highlight the importance of education, community engagement, technological support, and collaboration across sectors to create a local food system that is sustainable, healthy, and accessible to all. The emphasis on raising awareness, supporting local producers, and addressing affordability reflects a comprehensive approach to improving the local food landscape in Neath Port Talbot.

4

VISITOR ECONOMY

How can we better promote and support NPT's tourism and events offer and ensure the whole sector is working together?

Promoting Positive Image and Awareness: Participants emphasised the need to change the perception of NPT, often associated with industrial areas, by highlighting its natural beauty and cultural assets. One participant said,

"People think of the steelworks and pollution, but we need to change that perception and showcase the beautiful beach and countryside."

The

"Dramatic Heart"

branding was mentioned as a way to promote the area's hidden gems and encourage a positive image.

Supporting Creative Industries: There was a strong emphasis on using creative industries to promote NPT. The creative community talked about cross-collaborations among music, film, and art sectors. One participant mentioned,

"We need to link local musicians with filmmakers and use original music to promote the region, making it synonymous with the arts."

The importance of supporting local bands and creating opportunities for them to perform was also discussed, including using venues and recording studios to encourage local talent.

Developing Cultural Events and Film Opportunities: Participants highlighted the value of events for attracting tourists and bringing the community together. One participant referenced a successful past event,

"National Theatre Wales put on one of the most successful creative events with 'The Passion,' which drew 10,000 people to watch Michael Sheen perform."

There was also discussion about making it easier for film productions to come to NPT, with plans for a new film office and strategies to attract filmmakers to use local locations.

Local Collaboration and Networking: Collaboration across local businesses, artists, and tourism stakeholders was seen as crucial. There were calls to

"build local networks and bring people together to share resources and ideas,"

and participants expressed enthusiasm for more networking events that help local stakeholders understand the available opportunities and work together effectively. The council and other participants discussed how new policies and strategies are being developed to better support and preserve the local community, culture, and heritage.

Highlighting Venues and Accessibility: Participants stressed the importance of utilising local venues effectively to support both cultural events and tourism. One participant expressed frustration about the lack of opportunities for original music in local venues, saying,

"The Princess Royal seems to have tribute acts but nothing for original music."

Improving access to these venues and making them more adaptable for a wider range of events were also discussed as important factors for enhancing the tourism and cultural offerings.

Enhanced Advertising and Communication: There was a consensus that more needs to be done to advertise events effectively to both locals and tourists. The council mentioned plans to improve advertising, including creating a more streamlined way for events to be listed and promoted through their platforms. One participant suggested,

"We need a better way to inform people of local events, from music gigs to festivals."

These themes highlight the importance of changing perceptions, fostering local talent, supporting cultural events, improving collaboration, and enhancing communication to better promote NPT's tourism and events sector.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

How can we collaborate across all sectors to improve the health and wellbeing of people across Neath Port Talbot?

Centralised Information and Awareness: A major challenge identified was the lack of awareness about available services. Participants emphasised the need for a centralised system to share information about resources. One suggestion was to create an AI-powered search engine dedicated to well-being services, allowing individuals to easily access information. One participant said,

"We need a centralised way for people to find out what's available—something that can be updated easily and not rely on one organisation managing it."

There was discussion about a mailing list or database to which organisations could contribute and access.

Improving Access and Transport: Transport issues were highlighted as a major barrier to accessing well-being activities, particularly for those living in rural or valley areas. One participant noted,

"Transport is an absolute huge impact on anything—providing transport would overcome many barriers for getting people engaged in activities."

Participants emphasised the importance of improving transport links to ensure that residents could access well-being initiatives, activities, and services.

Holistic and Community-Based Services: Participants discussed the importance of a holistic approach to health and well-being, focusing on activities beyond traditional healthcare. One participant noted,

"Bringing services into the community through clinics and hubs can make healthcare more accessible, especially in rural areas."

There were also calls for collaboration among organisations to provide a wide range of services, such as nature-based activities, craft sessions, and sports, to improve well-being.

Mental Health and Waiting List Support: Concerns were raised about long waiting lists for mental health services. Participants suggested providing interim support for people while they wait for professional help. One participant asked,

"Could there be other services that people can access while they're on a waiting list for professional help?"

This could include nature groups or other community activities that can help support mental health while individuals are waiting for formal services.

Cross-Sector Collaboration: Participants repeatedly mentioned the importance of collaboration across sectors. One person stated,

"We need to ensure all the different health and well-being networks form collaborations and link together, allowing for better signposting between services."

The goal is to reduce siloed working and enhance partnerships among different sectors, from healthcare and local authorities to community organisations and small businesses.

Engaging Local Businesses: Local businesses were encouraged to contribute to well-being initiatives, such as partnering with Foster Wales or providing spaces for community activities. One participant from Foster Wales explained their Business Partners Initiative that offers local businesses different levels of engagement to support foster care. Businesses could promote fostering opportunities or provide flexibility for employees involved in fostering.

Social Prescribing and Arts-Based Initiatives: Social prescribing was identified as a valuable tool for enhancing well-being. Participants mentioned the role of the arts in providing therapeutic benefits, including initiatives like craft clubs, pottery, and theatre. One participant explained,

"We take groups to places like lavender farms to use heritage and nature for mental health support."

There was also a desire to incorporate more arts and culture into well-being strategies, highlighting the positive impact these activities can have on mental health.

These themes underscore the need for better access to information, improved transport, more holistic and community-based services, and increased collaboration to support health and well-being across Neath Port Talbot.

6 COMMUNITY ACTION

How can empower ourselves and each other as citizens to create healthier, happier local places together?

Focus on Strengths and Community Assets: Participants emphasised the need to focus on the strengths of communities, rather than their deficiencies. One participant noted,

"We need to start focusing on the strengths of the community rather than the weaknesses... it's the individuals we need to focus on, not what we think they need."

This asset-based approach encourages empowerment by leveraging existing talents and resources within communities.

Improving Communication and Awareness: There was a strong call for better communication and awareness about local resources and services. One person highlighted the lack of knowledge about what services are available, saying,

"Knowledge is power... there are lots of things out there in my community that people don't know about."

Participants suggested that local groups and organisations need to collaborate to ensure that everyone knows what is happening, using centralised hubs, newsletters, and online platforms.

Reducing Duplication and Increasing Collaboration: Participants discussed the problem of duplicated services and activities, which leads to inefficiency. One participant said,

"There's so much duplication, you don't know who's doing what... and as a result, who to turn to."

The need for coordination among organisations to minimise overlaps and use resources more effectively was repeatedly highlighted.

Access to Transport: Transport was identified as a major barrier to community engagement. Participants stressed the importance of accessible and affordable transport, especially in rural and valley areas. One participant said,

"Transport is a huge barrier... providing free transport for community activities would be a game-changer."

Addressing transport issues would enable more people to access activities, events, and essential services.

Active Listening and Community-Led Decision Making: Participants called for more active listening to understand what people actually want. One participant shared,

"The answers lie within the community, not from people making decisions for them."

Community assemblies and grassroots engagement were suggested as ways to involve people in decision-making and ensure that the initiatives reflect their needs.

Volunteer Engagement and Community Ownership: Volunteering was highlighted as an important way to empower individuals and create community ownership. One participant from Crisis noted,

"Volunteering is a way to empower ourselves to create happier, healthier local places."

There were suggestions to involve volunteers in creating and managing community projects to build a sense of ownership and engagement.

Safe and Accessible Community Spaces: Many participants emphasised the value of accessible community spaces where people can gather. Libraries, parks, and community centres were seen as crucial for fostering social interaction. One participant mentioned,

"Libraries are at the heart of our communities... they are safe spaces where people can engage with others."

These spaces could help tackle loneliness and promote mental well-being.

Engaging Young People: There was a discussion about the need to create opportunities for young people, including spaces where they can gather and activities that help them build skills. One participant noted,

"There's nowhere for youngsters to go... they hang around in groups, which creates unease, even if they are not doing anything wrong."

Addressing this need could help reduce fear in the community and provide positive outlets for youth.

These themes highlight the importance of building on community strengths, improving communication, enhancing transport options, fostering volunteerism, and ensuring that citizens are actively involved in shaping their community. The focus on safe spaces, opportunities for youth, and reducing service duplication are all key elements in creating healthier, happier communities.

7

TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

How can we collaborate and make it easier for everyone to get around Neath Port Talbot in a sustainable way?

Integration of Transport Modes: A major theme was the need for better integration between different modes of transport—such as buses and trains. One participant noted,

"The integration of the different modes of transport... getting the bus companies and the rail on the same side is essential."

The lack of integration leads to difficulties in using public transport efficiently, forcing people to rely on private vehicles instead.

Improving Public Transport Services: Participants emphasised the importance of making public transport services more frequent and reliable, especially for those in rural areas. One participant shared,

"There's nothing available in rural areas, which adds to the impact of social isolation."

Regular routes and better links were suggested as ways to help those without private transport, such as older adults or those with health issues.

Public Ownership and Accountability: Some participants argued that public transport should be more accountable and potentially under public ownership. One person said,

"Public transport should come under the direct ownership of the Senedd, controlled along with local authorities."

They felt this would ensure better service provision across the region, rather than focusing on profitable routes alone.

Collaboration and Community-Led Solutions: Community-led initiatives like carpooling and community transport schemes were highlighted as potential solutions to transport issues. One participant discussed a carpooling project,

"There used to be a project where you could find other people going the same place and share a car."

Another mentioned the success of Pembrokeshire's

"Take Me Too"

community transport, suggesting it could be replicated in Neath Port Talbot.

Active Travel and Alternative Transport: Active travel options, such as walking and cycling, were also discussed as essential components of sustainable transport. One participant said,

"We need more active travel routes that are linked up with each other."

There was a focus on ensuring cycling and walking routes are safe and accessible, which could also help promote health and well-being in the community.

Targeted Transport Solutions for Specific Needs: The discussion highlighted the need for targeted transport solutions, like smaller buses or minibuses, especially for areas with narrow roads or lower demand. One participant suggested,

"We need smaller, almost personal vehicles that can navigate the tight lanes."

This type of tailored solution would allow better access in areas where large buses are impractical.

Barriers to Transport and Social Isolation: Many participants mentioned the impact of inadequate transport on social isolation and well-being. People who cannot drive due to health or age face barriers in accessing essential services. One participant noted,

"Social isolation is a huge factor at the moment... and the lack of transport only adds to it."

This isolation can lead to poorer mental health and further socioeconomic issues.

Flexible Transport Solutions for Employment: Transportation was also linked to employment, with participants noting that a lack of early morning or evening services limits job opportunities. One person explained,

"If you want to start a shift at 6 AM, it's difficult to find transport to get you there."

Flexible transport options, such as car-sharing or subsidised transport for workers, were seen as ways to address this issue.

The Role of Technology and Community Hubs: Technology was mentioned as a way to facilitate carpooling and community transport through apps or websites. Additionally, community hubs were suggested as places where remote work could be done while providing a social environment. One participant shared,

"Community hubs where people can go to do their work... help combat social isolation by allowing people to meet their neighbours."

These themes highlight the need for improved transport integration, better public transport services, targeted local solutions, active travel routes, and community-led initiatives to create a more sustainable and accessible transport system in Neath Port Talbot.

The focus is on reducing isolation, improving access to work, and making it easier for everyone to travel without relying on private cars.

JOBS & SKILLS

How can we develop the skills and talent we need to be successful, within Neath Port Talbot, now and for the future?

Workplace Readiness and Life Skills: Employers noted that young people often lack basic workplace readiness, such as punctuality, professionalism, and understanding expectations. One participant shared,

"They're unprepared for the workplace... even though we go through policies, they don't always look for work once they've finished a task."

There was a call for life skills training to help ease this transition.

Subsidies and Support for Skill Development: The need for financial incentives or subsidies to help businesses take on and train new talent was highlighted. One person noted,

"We basically got six months of her salary paid at quite a low wage, which helped us take her on full-time."

There were several mentions of past programs like

"Go Wales"

which helped small businesses access talent and skills, with calls to revive or enhance such schemes.

Apprenticeships and Practical Learning: Apprenticeships were seen as an ideal solution for developing industry-specific skills while moulding workers to fit the needs of a business. One participant said,

"The apprenticeship program is about moulding that person as you want them to be for future work."

Apprenticeships were also highlighted as opportunities for both young people and adults, including graduate apprenticeships.

Opportunities for Care-Experienced Youth: A powerful theme was the need to support care-experienced youth through work placements and interviews. One participant shared,

"One boy applied for about a thousand jobs... he's very articulate, but he wasn't getting anywhere."

Businesses were encouraged to offer short, manageable work experiences to help care-experienced young people gain work readiness and improve their chances in the job market.

Collaboration Between Education and Employers: There was strong advocacy for more collaboration between businesses and educational institutions to provide work experience opportunities and practical skills training. For instance,

"It would be really beneficial for A-level students to have work experience with local companies... so they can add that to their CVs."

This theme extended to businesses working with local colleges to identify needed skills and create relevant training programs.

Access to Local Opportunities and Training: Many participants raised concerns about the limited training opportunities, particularly in rural areas like the valleys. One person mentioned,

"There's not much for youngsters up in the valleys... if they don't have transport, they struggle to access training in town."

Expanding access to online training or extending programs to these areas was seen as crucial.

Raising Awareness About Available Training: Several participants emphasised that people often don't know about existing programs or training opportunities. One participant explained,

"Unless people know about us, they don't know where to come to find us,"

which highlights the need for better communication and outreach about available resources and training schemes.

Upskilling the Current Workforce: There was also discussion about the importance of upskilling those already in employment, especially those at risk of redundancy or looking to take the next step in their careers. One person noted,

"We're talking about school leavers and unemployed people, but also those already skilled who need to take the next step."

It is worth noting that while there are many opportunities for skill development, greater coordination between businesses, education providers, and government support systems is needed to ensure these opportunities are accessible and well-known.

acorn by SYNERGIE

GRŴP COLEGAU NPTC GROUP OF COLLEGES

4theRegion would especially like to thank **Acorn by Synergie**, and **NPTC Group of Colleges**, for their ongoing Partnership and support.

THANK YOU!

This Opportunities Report has been produced by 4theRegion using the voice recordings and post-it notes collected during the **It's Your Neath Port Talbot** conference on 20th September 2024. We hope to have captured common themes and individual perspectives to provide a useful resource for anyone in who may wish to take ideas and new initiatives forward, or connect with what is already happening. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this event and to this Report, for sharing your time, insights and perspectives with us.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

We are thrilled to announce that *It's Your Neath Port Talbot* will return in September 2025, continuing this important collective conversation about the future of our county. We invite everyone to join us once again to share ideas, build connections, and explore the next stage of opportunities for Neath Port Talbot. For updates and event details, please visit the 4theRegion website at www.4theregion.org.uk We look forward to seeing you there!

You can also stay connected with 4theRegion through our monthly online forums, where we discuss a wide range of topics and themes relevant to the four counties of South West Wales.

PHOTOS: Innovation Photography

EVENT PARTNERS & SPONSORS

Cyngor Castell-Nedd Port Talbot / Neath Port Talbot Council

Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges

Neath Port Talbot CVS – Castell-Nedd Port Talbot

The Dramatic Heart of Wales

Food Partnership Partneriaeth Bwyd

4theRegion Working Together

green Economy Conference & Exhibition

Balance Your Outlook

South West Wales Connected / De Orllewin Cymru Cysylltu

EXHIBITORS

Prifysgol Cymru Y Drindod Dewi Sant – University of Wales Trinity Saint David

awel aman tawe

ukse.

ABP | Associated British Ports

Arloesi Agor Innovation

SWITCH On Skills

AMRC Cymru

Tempo

Cronfa Treftadaeth Ddiwylliannol Heritage Fund

PACE CYMRU

GCRE – Global Centre of Rail Excellence

Hutchinson Thomas – Solicitors & Notaries Public

HAPS – Trawsnewid Cartrefi Cymru / Transforming Welsh Homes

Regional Learning and Skills Partnership – Partneriaeth Dysgu a Sgiliau Rhanbarthol – De-Orllewin Cymru / South West Wales

Bargen Ddinesig BAE Abertawe Swansea Bay City Deal

Neath Deli

Springfield Advisory

Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru – Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

acorn by Synergie

HWS – Your Comfort – Taken Seriously

Aspire 2Be.

ATTENDING THE EVENT

Swansea University – Prifysgol Abertawe

Swansea Bay Construction Support Group

arvato connect

2 Inspire You

West Glamorgan age Cymru

ARCS

PITMAN TRAINING

pelaTis Digital

Institute of Coding in Wales

WOOLLYWONDERSBYJO

BCRS Business Loans

NiNe Training Limited

BANKHEADDESIGN

Bauer Media Group

pobl – people making a difference

Swansea Building Society

ewmpas

sterlingrees

YSGOL CWM BROMBIL

BEST

branding by becca

Building Blocks Family Centre

Busnes | Business Wales

jgr group

techno camps

Cae Tân

AFAN LODGE

RGE Associates

STORI CYMRU

Hutchinson Thomas

TRUEWOOL

foster wales Swansea

Gyrfa Cymru Careers Wales

Bargen Ddinesig BAE Abertawe Swansea Bay City Deal

Whitehead Ross Education & Consulting

SHINE

Express Reinforcements Ltd

INSPIRE Training

NPT Wildlife Friendly Council

RHWYDWAITH Gorllewin Cymru Greadigol

Creative West Wales NETWORK

Remoo Mortgages

Glamorgan Legacy Ltd

Workways+ Gwaithlyrdd

Coleg Gwyr Abertawe Gower College Swansea

DWJ WEALTH MANAGEMENT LTD

Rosa's Bakery & Shop

Fantom Factory

PROMISE wedding lingerie

GORWEL

Mel's Maids

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales

Learning Disability Wales – Anabledd Dysgu Cymru

Matthews Confidential Shredding

meecreative

CSCM

Witty Words

Crisis

pcr global

THE WELSH HOUSE

axis LEASING

global

KONSHUSH DESIGN

SNPTCAN

SEADRAGON SOFTWARE

mess up the mess

SOCIAL BUTTERFLY Strategic Marketing

Paragon Engineered Timber

STARKI Experts in Architecture

We welcome you to connect with 4theRegion on any of the issues or ideas contained in this report. We can connect you with like-minded people or organisations, offer support to facilitate further conversations and working groups, or just have an informal chat, whether you are part of a business, an organisation, or an individual with a desire to do something for the region.

Email Dawn, Zoe or Amanda, at mail@4theRegion.org.uk

4theRegion

WORKING TOGETHER

The collaborative regional alliance for South West Wales.

www.4theregion.org.uk